

VINDICATION

Of the PROTEST against the Result of the
Northampton-Council.

In Answer to a LETTER published by the Reverend
 Messieurs *Robert Breck, Joseph Asbley, Timothy
 Woodbridge, Chester Williams*; Intitled, *An
 Account of the Conduct of the Council which dis-
 miss'd the Reverend Mr. EDWARDS from the
 Pastoral Care of the first Church at Northampton;
 with Reflections on the Protestation accompanying
 the printed Result of that Council, and the Letter
 published relating to that Affair.*

In a Letter to a GENTLEMAN.

By WILLIAM HOBBY, A. M.

Pastor of the first Church at *Reading.*

How forcible are right Words! But what doth your Arguing reprove?
 Job. 6. 25.

BOSTON: Printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND, opposite the
 the Prison in *Queen-Street.*

VINDICATION

Of the Protest against the Rights of the
Non-Resistant-Community

A Letter to a Friend, published by the
Rev. John H. Stoddard, D.D.,
of the Congregational Church, Boston;
in answer to the Circular of the General
Assembly of the Non-Resistant-Community,
dated at New York, 1846, and the
Circular of the British and Foreign
Anti-Slavery Society, dated at London,
1847.



In a Letter to a Gentleman.

By WILLIAM HOBBS, A.M.

Printed and Sold by S. Kneass, opposite the
the British in New York.

A

VINDICATION, &c.

S I R,

Was not a little surpris'd, when, at your House, about the latter End of *October*, you were pleas'd to tell me, that some Remarks had been made upon our Protest against the Result of the *Northampton* Council; as I found these Remarks had been published for a very considerable Time, and yet I had never heard any Thing of the Matter, tho' frequently at *Boston*, and more frequently hearing from thence: but a cursory View of the Letter, containing those Remarks, quickly abated my Surprise. I easily perceiv'd, the Piece lov'd Obscurity: And there I determin'd to leave it, at that Time, and long afterwards, especially as I scarce ever heard it mention'd in Conversation. But having lately heard from the West, that this Letter makes a Noise in that Part of the Country, as if it was a Confutation of the Grounds of our Protest; I address'd my self to a Re-consideration of it, and to an Endeavour to vindicate our Protest against all the Cavils that have been rais'd against it. How far I have fail'd in this my Attempt, I leave to your Judgment, and that of others far less penetrating and discerning, after due Examination. — And here, sure I am, that I am no Friend to Altercations in general; as looking on such a Temper no Friend to Religion; much less am I dispos'd to litigate with my Reverend Brethren, whom I esteem and honour, not indeed for this Work's Sake, but for their general Character; least of all wou'd I pursue a Triumph. Nevertheless,

as this Letter appears to me to be very partial, defective & unjust in the historical Part of it, and very fallacious in the Argumentative, whereby the less thinking Part of their Readers are greatly impos'd upon; the Cause of Truth will surely allow, if it doth not call for, some Animadversions upon their Letter, and Vindication of our Protest. In prosecuting this my Design, I shall,

I. Consider the Historical Part of their Letter, particularly as it relates to Matters previous to the sitting of the Council, as also to the Conduct of the Council during their Session. — And then

II. Shall consider their Reflections on the Protestation against the Result of the Council. — With this general Order I content myself, and so following the Gentlemen from Page to Page, shall endeavour (in the Words of Mr. *Pope*, in his Essay on Man) to shoot the Folly as it flies.

But I must stop a Moment, to thank the Gentlemen who have saved me some Part of Labour. For however, in the Preamble to or Title of their Letter, they seem to promise not only some Reflections on the Protestation against the Result of the Council, but also on a Letter published relating to that Affair; yet so intensely were their Eyes fix'd on the Protest, as to forget the Letter; unless perhaps they wisely judg'd it best to omit the Reflections upon it. — Nor would I forget to thank the Gentlemen also, for the Regard they seem to express to the Protestors, did it not appear that this was mere Grimace, by that Fleer which runs thro' the whole of their Reflections. I will therefore only say, had the Gentlemen maintain'd a due Regard to themselves, this would strongly have forbid the Publication of their Letter, it by no Means answering the Characters of Just & Impartial, with which they have embellish'd it. But all this you will say is *gratis Dictum* — Let us therefore proceed, as we propos'd,

I. To consider the Historical Part of their Letter, particularly here, as it relates to Matters previous to the sitting of the late Council at *Northampton*.

Here the Gentlemen inform us, that “the Church of *Northampton* have, for many Years been fully established in those Principles mention'd as their's in the Result.” This is not deny'd, but perhaps it may be as important, and more satisfying to the World, to have this History carry'd further back. Under Favour then I would say, that the Church of *Northampton* had it's Foundation laid

laid in Principles and a Practice exactly the same with what Mr. *Edwards* now insists upon ; as appears by the Records of the Church : And however the Church gradually departed from their original Establishment, under the Influence of that excellent Man, the Rev. Mr. STODDARD ; yet there was never any Change made by any Church-Act : Nor is any Thing contrary to the first Establishment found in the Records. — But still it is said, “ that Mr. *Edwards*, when he settled there, and for many Years after, acted agreeable to the present Principles of the Church, tho’ of late Years he has embrac’d the Principles mention’d in his Treatise.” — Be it so, yet sure Mr. *Edwards* has not left the Foundation, that is, of the Church : And what if he has varied from the Principles he first set out upon ? so have the Church, in not keeping to the Foundation. In a Word, the Church left their first Habitation, and Mr. *Edwards* endeavour’d nothing more than to lead ’em back to it. Why then all this Feud and Animosity ? Wherefore the Heat of this Anger ; because Mr. *Edwards* has changed his Sentiments on a disputable Point, of no great Importance in it self, these Gentlemen themselves being Judges ! Was this the Case when Mr. *Stoddard* led off the Church from their own Principles ? True indeed, this was offensive to many, as I find by a Letter sent from *Northampton* to *Boston*, about the Year 1705. But did Schisms & Divisions arise hence ? Were Councils call’d, or were Ministers found dispos’d to make a Separation between Pastor and People ? Was not Mr. *Stoddard* caress’d even by those that differ’d from him, the Church smil’d upon, and the Principles of Union and Moderation put in Practice ? The Way of Error is down-hill, easy and pleasant, but the Return hard and tiresome.

— *facilis Descensus Averni,*
sed revocare Gradus, hic Labor, hoc Opus est.

I mean not by what has been said, to throw a Blame upon the Gentlemen, as if their Account of these Facts was not true ; but to throw Light upon the State of *Northampton* Church, that so the Account may be more particular ; as also to prepare the Way for what may hereafter follow.

To come therefore nearer the Point : the Gentlemen tell us, in the Progress of their History, Pag. 2. “ that Mr. *Edwards* refused some
“ Persons who offered themselves to Admission, that is, to Baptism or the Lord’s Supper, whom the Church tho’t qualified for
“ Communion.”

“ Communion.” Whether this be so impartially represented as might have been expected, I leave you and others to judge, after hearing of the Case, which I understand to be this : there never was but one Person who offered himself to Admission, and was refus’d, if that Expression be here allowable. This Person offers himself, Mr. *Edwards* insists upon a Profession of Godliness : The Man replies, he hopes he can make such a Profession, but as he looks upon himself not oblig’d, he judges it not Prudent to do so ; and hereupon withdraws : Now without making any Reflections upon the Wisdom, Prudence and Piety of this Person’s Behaviour ; I ask, Was this Person refus’d Admission into the Church by his Pastor ? or did he not rather himself refuse Admission ?—Besides this, another Person manifested some Inclination to come into the Church, yet did not speak as being determin’d in his own Mind, but refer’d himself to Mr. *Edwards* for Advice ; and upon being advis’d not to come, until he tho’t he cou’d make a Profession of Godliness, he forbore to urge the Matter, or to oppose the Advice given him. — But with what Propriety cou’d these Gentlemen say, that Mr. *EDWARDS* refused those Persons whom the Church tho’t qualified for Communion ? Wou’d you not imagine by this Manner of Representation, that the Church had heard of this Matter ; had taken Cognizance of it, and upon weighing the Case, had come to some Determination about it ?—But no such Matter : The Church never enquir’d either directly or indirectly into their Qualifications, pass’d no Judgment hereupon, nor did they so much as know that they had any Desire to be admitted, till some Time after all that is abovementioned had passed.

Presently after in the same Page, The Gentlemen say, that “ the Church had examin’d the Scriptures and other Treatises on “ the Subject controverted.” This, I confess, is cautiously enough express’d, for they possibly might have read some Treatises on the Subject ; and yet such only as tended to confirm them in their present Sentiments : But the fair Construction of the Words must be, that the Church had examin’d the Scriptures and other Treatises on both Sides of the Question, so as upon receiving all the Light that was handed to them, to come to this Conclusion, *That the Controversy was sufficiently agitated.* Now on this stating of the Case, two Enquiries offer to Consideration. *First*, Whether the Church had really examin’d these Treatises ? And *Secondly*, How these

these Gentlemen came to the Knowledge of this Fact, as a Ground of their Assertion?—As to the first Point, three of these Gentlemen know, that the Fact was contested; and that it had been much insisted on, that there had been no fair Examination of the Controversy: That however Mr. *Stoddard's* Writings on one Side might have been read, yet it was insisted upon by Mr. *Edwards* and others, that there was great Reason to think that not one half of the Brethren had perus'd his Treatise on the other. This was urged before the Council that sat in the Winter, and many Things were produced in Confirmation hereof; and nothing was heard on the contrary, but only the Opinion of some of their Party: But the Fact was never properly enquired into.

And then as to the second Question, how these Gentlemen came to the Knowledge of this Fact, supposing it to be true in itself: Here I observe, that the Council made no Enquiry into this Matter; nor took any Course to satisfy themselves what Examination the Brethren had made into the Controversy. 'Tis true indeed, we had the Assertions of the Committee on one Side. But after all, the Gentlemen knew that the Point was disputed in Council; that several Arguments were alledg'd to disprove it; and that the Protestors assign'd it as one Reason why they cou'd not dismiss Mr. *Edwards* at that Time, because they were convinced in their own Minds, that the Church had not come to any proper Examination of the Point in Controversy: which they therefore desir'd might be urged upon them as a good Expedient to prevent the Separation.

Having thus touch'd upon some Passages of the Historical Relation of Facts antecedent to the sitting of the Council; I come now to consider it as it refers to the Conduct of the Council during their Session.

Here it may not be improper to give you an Account of one Thing which the Gentlemen in their particular Account have omitted.—The Rev. Pastor and Church having agreed to call Council, were very desirous that neither Party should have Advantage of the other, in Respect of Numbers; but that there shou'd be an Equality of Churches and Delegates. And so very careful were they in this Matter, as to agree that upon the Failure of one or more Churches, others should be provided as their seconds. This was doubtless very just: but all this Precaution cou'd not, it seems, secure the Event design'd, For it so happen'd, from what particular Cause

I say not, That all that Part of the Council sent for in Behalf of the Church were present ; whereas only three of the five Churches in Behalf of Mr. *Edwards* and his Party, were present at the convening of the Council. You will say here, But cou'd not this Difficulty be remedied, by an Addition on one Side, or Subtraction on the other ? Yes doubtless it might, and *de Jure* ought to be so ; but so vehement were the Gentlemen on the other Side of the Question, that notwithstanding all that was urged from the primary Design both of Pastor and People, as well as from the Nature and Reason of Things ; and tho' Mr. *Edwards* openly declar'd he did not look upon himself oblig'd to lay his Matters before the Council, unless he might have an equal Number of Judges ; yet *de facto* we cou'd obtain no such Favour, or rather Justice. However, Providence was more favourable to us : for when the Gentlemen had fully opened themselves in this Matter, insisting upon a Procedure in Council, notwithstanding the Disparity of Counsellors as to their Number, between the one Party and the other ; at this Point of Time, the Rev. Mr. *Reynolds* and Delegate appear'd among us, by which this Disparity was lessned ; for now but one of the five Churches sent for in Behalf of Mr. *Edwards*, was missing ; I mean the Church at *Cold-Spring*, which tho't not proper to join in Council. However, the Pastor of that Church being present at *Northampton*, we beg'd that we might be favour'd with his Assistance, as he was agreed upon by Mr. *Edwards* and his Church mutually ; but yet we beg'd in vain ; all the Favour we cou'd obtain, being this only, that if Mr. *Edwards* and Church agreed to his being of the Council (which they had done before) it shou'd be granted. This was at length consented to, and yet still Mr. *Billings* being without his Delegate, we wanted one Member to make us equal to the other Party in Council ; whom had we obtain'd, Mr. *Edwards* had very probably not have been dismiss'd ; but as a Relief under this Inconvenience was a Favour we utterly despair'd of, so we did not ask. This was omitted in the Gentlemen's particular Account of their Conduct : and why ? Doubtless because it was unaccountable.

The Council being conven'd and opened, the Gentlemen say, Pag. 2. that " the Pastor and Church desir'd the Council to find out some Method wherein the Pastor and Brethren might consistently unite in the Admission of Persons to special Ordinances, and yet retain their different Sentiments." But this I apprehend

a great Mistake, respecting both Pastor & Church. Mr. *Edwards*, I am sure, desir'd no such Thing; but on the contrary, declar'd, before a Number of Persons, that there was no possible Way of Accommodation, but by a Council offering such Measures of Light, as should avail to a Change of Sentiments, either in Pastor or People, or both, in Respect to the disputed Point. And as it was not the Desire of the Pastor, so neither was it of the Church, that the Council shou'd find out a Method, in which they might act together, each Party retaining their different Sentiments. 'Tis true, that the Council entertain'd Thoughts of this Nature, and acted hereupon: But the Church declar'd before the Council, that if Mr. *Edwards* shou'd be perswaded, that he might with a good Conscience comply with the Practice of the Church; yet unless he alter'd his Opinion, they cou'd not consent to his continuing as their Pastor: for they wou'd not have a Minister, that shou'd teach their Children such corrupt Doctrine.—Here then the Gentlemen are off their Guard, and talk without Book.

But however, no such Method, as abovemention'd, being found out, as indeed it was not desir'd, Mr. *Edwards*'s Dismissal is voted, a Result drawn up and publickly read, and say these Gentlemen, p. 4. "The Church voted their consent to the Result and Advice of the Council." Upon which, let me observe the unfair and inconsistent Manner in which this Vote was propos'd. The Determination of the Council was, as you may see by their two Votes, intirely *hypothetical*: That if Mr. *Edwards* shou'd still persist in his Principles, and if the Church shou'd still persist in theirs in Opposition to Mr. *Edwards*, and withal shou'd *insist* on a Separation, it was then Expedient and Necessary, that the Relation between Pastor and People shou'd be dissolved. This, I think, none can deny to be the true Construction of the Votes. Now this being the Case, one wou'd certainly have expected, that in Pursuance of this Resolve, Mr. *Edwards* should have been asked, *Whether he still persisted in his Principles?* And that the Church shou'd have been address'd with the same Inquiry, *Whether they still persisted in theirs?* And that these Things appearing upon Enquiry, the Church shou'd have been asked, *Whether they insisted upon a Separation?* And that this should have been the determining Vote. This, I say, any one would rationally have expected. But instead of all this, the Moderator, an unusual one indeed, puts a Vote to the Church

in these Words? *If you do consent to this Advice, please to manifest it.* Hereby plainly suggesting to the Church, that the Council, without *If's* or *And's*, did advise them to dismiss Mr. Edwards. Upon this, Sir, let me ask you, Is Mr. Edwards truly and fairly dismiss'd? Or is he not? The Church have voted their Consent to the Result and Advice of the Council. 'Tis granted. But the Council never gave any *absolute* Advice to his Dismission; and as to the *hypothetical* Part, it has never yet been enquired into. And 'till it is, must not Mr. Edwards be deemed still the Pastor of the first Church at Northampton?

Having thus finish'd my Remarks upon the Historical Part of the Gentlemen's Letter, I come now, as I propos'd, in the next Place,

II. To consider their Reflections on our *Protestation*; wherein I flatter myself with a sufficient Vindication of the Reasons of our Protest, from all Appearance of Inconsistence, either with ourselves, or with sound Reason. And I shall leave you to judge, whether their Cannon may not be advantagiously turned upon themselves.

It will, I hope, be sufficient, in Answer to all they have alledg'd against the two first Reasons of our Protest, to observe, that the Protestors view'd the Point in Controversy, first in an *absolute*, and secondly in a *relative* Light. In the *absolute* View, we look'd upon the Controversy as of no very great Importance, such as wise and good Men tho't differently of, while yet they maintain'd their charitable Regards to each other. We judg'd it, by no Means, of Importance equal to that of dismissing the Rev. Mr. Edwards; whom we esteemed richly furnish'd with Ministerial Gifts and Graces, and abundantly fitted for the Master's Use and Service; notwithstanding any Change in his Sentiments, even supposing he had not chang'd for the better. And in this our Opinion of him personally we are, I think, supported by the Council, who in their Result say, "We think ourselves bound to testify our full Charity towards him; and recommend him to any Church or People agreeing with him in Sentiments, as a Person eminently qualified for the Work of the Gospel-Ministry." 'Tis then granted on all Hands, that Mr. Edwards, notwithstanding the Change of his Sentiments, is intitled to full Charity as a Christian Man and Minister; and therefore we conclude it a Matter of great Importance, to have such a Person dismiss'd; especially at a Time when there

are so few to supply Vacancies, as the People of *Northampton* find to their great Labour, Cost & Sorrow.— But yet such a Minister may, in some Circumstances, be dismiss'd, even by those that have such an Opinion of him.—And this leads me to the *relative* View of the Controversy. Here then we beheld Mr. *Edwards* as the present Pastor of a People, who from an extraordinary Veneration to their former Pastor, the excellent Mr. *Stoddard*, and from a foolish Bigotry to the Principles they had imbibed from him, suffer'd themselves to be transported into a most ungospelized and infuriated Temper against Mr. *Edwards*; so that one wou'd almost think they wou'd sacrifice the Living, to the Honour of the Dead. In this Case, what can be done? The Sinews of Mr. *Edwards* his Usefulness are cut, he continuing in his present Principles, and they in theirs. These being the Circumstances of Things, as indeed they were, why may not a Separation be judg'd Expedient, and even Necessary, by those who have a good Opinion both of Mr. *Edwards* and his Principles; unless he must be doom'd to perpetual Discord & total Usefulness? And why are not the Protestors perfectly harmonious with themselves in the whole of this Procedure? Instead of saying with these Gentlemen, None will dispute this Matter, that is, doubt of their Inconsistency, I boldly say, that no Man of common Understanding will dare to deny the Harmony or Agreement between the Reason assign'd for not separating him, consider'd in itself, and their actually voting a Separation in such and such Circumstances. A Case in some Respects similar to this happned in our Neighbourhood not long since. The Pastor of a Church had been accus'd of some Criminal Imprudence. A Council being call'd to advise upon the Matter, and such a Council as chiefly consisted of the superiour Men in the Land; advised the Church by all Means to forgive the Offence of their Pastor, humbled under a Sense of his Fault; and to sit quiet and easy under his Ministry. Hereupon they adjourn'd: But upon their Adjournment finding, that a most unchristian Temper prevail'd among the People in general, which rendred them averse to the Continuance of their Pastor, and shut out all Prospects of his Usefulness; they unanimously advis'd to his Dismission. Yet none ever did, or without Folly cou'd charge the Council with the Appearance of Inconsistency. The same may be said in the present Case: When the Protestors judg'd of the Merits of the *Cause*; they determin'd,

that there was no Cause of Dismission. But when they compar'd the Cause with the unhappy *Temper* of the People of *Northampton*, they judg'd a Dismission necessary; as there remain'd no Prospect of *Mr. Edwards* his Usefulness among them.

But to fasten Inconsistency upon us, the Gentlemen expostulate, "How cou'd the Protestors consistently say, they cou'd not agree to a Separation at present, because *Mr. Edwards* his Principles were perfectly harmonious, &c. ? If this was a Reason against a Separation for the present, it would have been equally forcible in Time to come." P. 5. To which I answer: That viewing the Point controverted in itself, the Reason assign'd wou'd even be forcible against a Separation. Yet supposing the angry Tempest to be as high in the Minds of the People in Time to come, there wou'd be Reason for his Dismission grounded upon the Prospect of his Un-usefulness to his People, even tho' the Reason assign'd by us were ever so just. But if this Temper might be abated, and succeeded by a religious Calm, there wou'd be no Ground for his Dismission, even tho' the Reason assign'd by us were not true. And this was the Point we aim'd at and hop'd to obtain, by putting off the Dismission for the present, and in the mean Time recommending to the People a fair, calm, unprejudic'd Consideration of the Point in Controversy. In this Case, they needed not to have sacrific'd their Consciences, (as is suggested Pag. 5.) it would have suffic'd to have sacrific'd their Passions; by which their Consciences wou'd have been purg'd, and their Judgments rectify'd. For the Meek God will teach his Way, the Meek he will guide in Judgment.

Let us now see whether these Gentlemen's Cannon may not do Execution upon themselves.— With Regard to *Mr Edwards*, they are in full Charity with him, and highly recommend him to a People of his own Sentiments. 'Tis presumed then, that the Point in Controversy is of no great Importance, consider'd in it self. Why then are they so eager for his Dismission? Because, say they, the People have their Right of private Judgment, and, as is intimated, judge that *Mr. Edwards* has alter'd the Gospel-Charter. But might not the People of *Northampton* have enjoy'd their Right of private Judgment, kept their Principles and their Minister too? Let two of these Gentlemen themselves be Judges; who, in their friendly and Christian Advice to the People at *Cold-Spring*, differing with their Pastor upon the same Point, thus agreeably express themselves:

"We

“ We would with Meekness & Charity recommend to you Moderation & Calmness ; the Matter in Question is a disputable Point ; and great and good Men have differ’d in Sentiment upon it, and yet held Communion with each other notwithstanding. — We can’t at present see, but if you study the Things that make for Peace, your Pastor and you may amicably consist together, and walk as Christians in all Gospel-Ordinances.” This is surely good Advice, and that the Gentlemen herein harmonize with the Gospel, perhaps none will deny ; but are they so harmonious with themselves ? Let us see ; here are two Churches differing from their Pastors on the same Point of Controversy : In the one Church it seems, *Pastor and People may consist together and walk as Christians in all Gospel-Ordinances, notwithstanding their different Sentiments*. The other Church may not, but the Pastor must be dismiss’d ; and those that think the Pastor and Church may walk together, are cry’d out upon, as inconsistent Men. This, I confess, is one of those Things that are hard to be understood, and so let it be thrown into the Heap of Unintelligibles.

But say the Gentlemen, Pag. 5. “ The Controversy, that is at Northampton, was of such Importance, that the Doors of the Church had been shut for some Years past, and must have continued so, unless one or other of the Parties had alter’d their Sentiments, or sacrific’d their Consciences.” — Surely not so, if (as was said before) the Church had sacrific’d their Passions : and don’t the Gentlemen say the same Thing, when in their Address to the People at Cold-Spring, they recommend Moderation & Meekness to them as the Way in which *they may consist and walk together, notwithstanding the different Sentiments of Pastor and People* ? — But let us examine this Matter as it relates to the Time past : And here it appears, that it was but about a Year and half, from the first seeming Refusal of a Person that had offer’d himself for Admission. And it was near half a Year after that, before the Church-Doors were shut against such as were willing to profess Godliness ; for at this Time, a young Woman offered herself, who was willing to make such a Profession as Mr. Edwards insisted on : but when the Matter was propos’d to the Committee of the Church, they won’t by no Means suffer it. Thus, not the Pastor, but the Brethren really shut the Church-Doors about a twelve Month before the Council : And Folly and Passion have been Door-keepers ever since. — If it be

be said here, that Mr. *Edwards* had long before declar'd in private Conversation, that he cou'd not be active in admitting Persons any more without a *Profession of Godliness*, unless he shou'd receive further Light; and that this Conversation had taken Air in the Church: Yet did this amount in any Propriety to *shutting the Doors* of the Church? When he only declar'd his present Scruple, without as yet acting any Thing, either publicly or privately, or so much as actually refusing any one Person; and while he declar'd himself still an Enquirer? And then it appear'd in Fact, that this private Conversation did not hinder Persons offering themselves still to join with the Church.

Having thus as I hope fully vindicated the two first Reasons of our Protest, I come now to consider their Remarks upon our *third* Reason, which was, "It appears to us, that there have been
 " no proper Essays in the Way of fair Reasoning with, or before
 " the Parties, to convince either of them, of the Truth or Falseness
 " of their Principles. Which, Love to the Truth itself, and their
 " Souls requires."—Here the Gentlemen again expostulate, P. 6.
 " How cou'd the Protestors say, that no proper Essays had been
 " made; when nothing is more obvious, than that the Rev. Mr.
 " *Edwards* had calmly reason'd with his People, both from the
 " Pulpit as well as in Conversation with many of them?" And this Argument or Objection (if it may be called one) they endeavour to strengthen by considering the peculiar Advantage Mr. *Edwards* enjoyed, on Account of the *high Opinion* his People had of him, and *their endeared Affection* to him. Here let us premise; that Mr. *Edwards* calmly reason'd with his People, we doubt not: but did his People calmly *bear* his Reasoning? Was there not such a Turbulency in their Minds, and such a Prejudice against his Sentiments, as stop'd their Ears to his Reasoning, tho' he reason'd ever so wisely? Did the one *half* of the People ever attend Mr. *Edwards* his *Lectures* on the controverted Point, or the one *half* of them ever read his printed Treatise upon it? These Gentlemen know, it was our Apprehension, that they never did: and that it was a given Reason for our not dismissing him *at present*. And with Regard to the *high Opinion and endear'd Affection* which Mr. *Edwards* his People had for him, we say, that this had been the Case in Fact *before* he alter'd his Sentiments, we well know; and that he still *deserv'd* their Esteem, we readily grant: but was this
 actually

actually the Case now; or had it been since the opening of the Controversy? Don't these Gentlemen know, that hereupon there ensued an immediate Alienation of Affection; that he was now as low in their Regards, as he was before high; that however they tho't well of him as a Man, as a Scholar, and as a Christian, they were averse to him as their Pastor? Here let the Gentlemen speak for themselves; three of whom, being of a Council that sat in the Winter, say; "It appears to us, that there is a great Uneasiness and Disaffection arisen between Mr. *Edwards* and his People." And afterwards,— "Which with many other Things have produced a great Degree of Alienation, and caused a Want of Meekness and Charity towards each other." Now, how Mr. *Edwards* shou'd have the Advantage of his People's *high Opinion of him, and endear'd Affection to him* in his Endeavours to prevail with them in this Controversy, and at the same Time there shou'd be subsisting, *great Uneasiness and Disaffection, great Alienation and a Want of Meekness & Charity*, I understand not: This is another of those Knots, which we must leave these Gentlemen to untie.— But now let us suppose (tho' we by no Means allow) what the Gentlemen insinuate to be true, that Mr. *Edwards* stood high in the Affections of his People in the Progress of the Controversy, supposing further that they calmly heard all he said, and as calmly read all he wrote; yet I demand, how is this any Argument, that *proper Essays in the Way of fair Reasoning with or before the Parties, had been made*? This, I confess, is absurd eno' of all Conscience. Supposing two Persons differing from one another in Matters of Law, and being unable to satisfy each other by all their Arts of Reasoning, they prosecute their Matters in due Form; wou'd it not appear very odd & uncouth, shou'd the Judge say, There was no Need of any Council at Law; for that the Parties had in the Way of fair Reasoning made their best Essays to convince one another! Full as strange doth it appear, for these Gentlemen to alledge Mr. *Edwards* his disputing with his People, as an Instance of fair Reasoning with or before the Parties in Order to their Reconciliation. In one Case and in the other, 'tis the Inability of the Parties to satisfy one another, that lays the Foundation for the Necessity of the fair Reasonings of others, as impartial Mediators, weighing, judging, and manifesting the Truth in it self, and in it's Importance. When these Gentlemen ask, *Whether the Protestors have*
the

the Vanity to imagine, that they cou'd in a short Time convince the People of Northampton, when Mr. Edwards cou'd not? I leave others to determine, whether the Question favours most of Wisdom, or of Modesty.

But that this Objection against our third Reason of Protest may not at last be found wanting, we are inform'd, that *the neighbouring Ministers had spent considerable Time in endeavouring to convince Mr. Edwards.* To elucidate this Matter from the best Information I can obtain, I would say, that all the Time *they* had spent with Mr. Edwards was in a Conference he had with them, more than a *twelve Month* before: and yet three of these Gentlemen engag'd in this Conference, did, in the formention'd Result, and long after this Conference, exprefs themselves in these Words; "When a Minister embraces any Principles suppos'd to be Erroneous, the divine Rule obliges, that *proper Measures* be used to convince him of his Mistake, before any Steps be taken to procure a Separation between that Minister and his Church; *which, we suppose, has not been fully done in the present Case.*" Here two Things want Explanation and Reconciliation. In the *first Place*, How these Gentlemen, while they seem to confess that proper Measures had *not* been fully used to convince Mr. Edwards of his Mistake, cou'd exclaim against *us* for saying much the same Thing, *viz.* That it appear'd to us that there had been no proper Essays in the Way of fair Reasoning, &c. — *Secondly*, if the *divine Rule* obliges that proper Measures shou'd be used to convince Mr. Edwards of his Mistake, before any Steps shou'd be taken to procure a Separation between him and his Church; how cou'd these Gentlemen then advise to an *immediate* Separation, when they themselves had publickly determin'd, that these Measures had *not* been fully taken? And not only so, but that others who produce this very Objection against the Regularity of such a Separation, should be exclaim'd against as acting a strange unaccountable Part? Sure these Gentlemen wou'd not contradict the *divine Rule* in their own Mouths; why then did *they* not use those Measures, which that Rule oblig'd to, before they advis'd to a Separation? But perhaps they were jealous, that in endeavouring to convince Mr. Edwards of his Mistake, they shou'd with the other worthy Gentleman be convinc'd of their own. However this be, *Happy is he that condemneth not himself, in that Thing which he alloweth.*

And

And now with Regard to the last Reason of our Protest, which was ; “ The Church (or at least its Committee) while they offer “ to us Reasons for separating them from their Pastor, yet will not “ suffer us so to enter into the Grounds of the Reasons, as to offer “ them that Light which the Word of God affords ; which we “ esteem an Imposition on our Consciences, and doth but tend to “ keep them in the dark.”— The Gentlemen here say roundly, P. 6. “ It is certain that neither Mr. *Edwards* nor the Church of “ *Northampton* determin’d to refer the Point in Controversy to “ the Decision of the Council.” On which let me observe, that if they mean, the Pastor and Church determin’d not to refer the Point to any *authoritative Decision* ; this may be very true, but is nothing to the Purpose. But if hereby they mean, as they surely must in Order to oppose us, that the Pastor and Church had determin’d, that the Council should *use no Essays in the Way of fair Reasoning with or before the Parties, to convince either of them of the Truth or Falseness of their Principles*, they say what is ridiculous in itself, and not true in Fact. ’Tis, I think, absurd to suppose, that the Pastor and Church who had taken such Pains to procure a Council agreeable to their different Sentiments, in Order to mediate the Cause between the Parties, and if possible, to reconcile them, should foreclose their own Minds, and shut their Eyes against the Light which was necessary to a Reconciliation. Besides, did not the Letters missive *desire the Presence of the Council to give their best Advice for a Remedy from the present unsettled broken State of the Church by Reason of this Controversy* ? Now how cou’d we be enabled to give the best or indeed any Advice for this Remedy, unless we consider’d the Malady, and were allow’d to offer to them our Sentiments upon the Merits of the Cause in Controversy, and of the Importance of it ? To go into any other Method, is as if when a Man labour’d of the Head-Ach, a Physitian, without considering the Cause, should rashly advise to cutting off the Head. Add to all this, that three of these Gentlemen must certainly know, by what Mr. *Edwards* laid before them in the Winter, that he suppos’d the decisive Council should have Liberty of *reasoning with the Parties* on their Principles : And as this was what they knew he suppos’d, so he insisted upon it with his Church, that the Council shou’d not be fetter’d or laid under any Restrictions whatsoever ; but shou’d be left at full Liberty to endeavour a *Reconciliation*, by what

what Measures their own Discretion should suggest, and not such as the arbitrary Will of the Parties should impose. And as this was the most likely, and in my Opinion the only Way of compromising Matters, *viz.* the Way of a free open calm Debate ; so it seems strange, upon any other Footing, that the Pastor & Church shou'd send to so remote Parts for any Members of the Council : and wou'd have been as strange, shou'd they have submitted to be Members of it. With what Face then cou'd these Gentlemen say, that neither Mr. *Edwards* nor the Church determin'd to refer the Point in Controversy to the Decision of the Council ? And what is all their after-Language, but vain Cavilling and mere Amusement ?

But to follow the Gentlemen in drawing to a Close ; here they say Pag. 7. " What renders the *Protestation* more surprizing, is, " that when these Things lay with so much Weight on their Minds, " they shou'd never so much as *mention* them, when Matters were " debated in Council, *before* they had come to a *Result* ; which " we cannot remember they ever did." This, 'tis confessed, wou'd have been very surprizing to us, had not our Minds been prepared by some foregoing Things, which argue a *Cloud* upon their *Understanding* ; and why not upon their *Memory* ? This we well remember, that before the Council had come to a Result, we declar'd we should *protest*, in Case ; That we mention'd several Arguments, as Reasons why we cou'd not come into such a Result as they seem'd fond of, which they might easily think wou'd be the Grounds of our Protest ; And that we read our *Protest* to them before their *Result* was published. Is it not strange now, that when we understood each other, we shou'd be such *Barbarians* to these Gentlemen ! And yet it seems, their Memory serves to mind them of something that pass'd, minute in itself and low in them to mention : Yea, to mind 'em of what never pass'd, in the Manner they have represented. For, say they with a Sneer, " Indeed we well remember, that " some of the Protestors with a pretty deal of Pathos urged, that " Mr. *Edwards* his Dismission might be defer'd for some Months, " that his Salary might be continued." That this was mention'd by one Gentleman, I grant : And that it was immediately discarded among our selves as a Matter of small Consideration to us, I well know : But that it was urged, that it was urged with a *Pathos*, a pretty deal of *Pathos*, I absolutely deny. Here instead of making any Remarks of my own, I choose rather to leave the Gentlemen to the Reflections of their own Consciences.

Thus,

Thus, Sir, I have finish'd my Remarks upon the Letter of these Reverend Gentlemen ; of whom, after all, I have a much greater Esteem than of their Piece, and for whom I wou'd make all due Allowances. Not suffering myself to think, they were guilty of any wilful Defect ; but, that either thro' want of Time, a Degree of Prejudice, or thro' an hurry of Spirit, they did not suffer themselves to examine their own Sentiments and Conduct, nor duly to weigh ours ; whereby they have precipitated themselves into those Measures, which have wrong'd us, expos'd themselves, and impos'd on the World. Not abating therefore of any just Regards to them, I wou'd heartily pity poor *Northampton*, whose violent Temper has depriv'd 'em of one of the richest of outward Blessings, a painful faithful and successful Pastor, whom *Gadarene-like* they have desir'd to depart out of their Coasts. 'Tis Matter of Grief also, that this unhappy Spirit haunts other Places, carrying an hideous Visage and a threatning Aspect. Yet hoping after all, that this Spirit will in due Time and by wise Council be laid ; that *Northampton* will bethink itself, find their Bowels yearn to their Pastor, under whose Shadow they sat so long, and with so much Delight, and that they will not wholly forsake their own Mercies ; and that God will pour out a Spirit of Peace with Truth and Holiness upon all his Churches, and enable all to maintain the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace — With these fervent Wishes and earnest Prayers, I subscribe,

Your obliged Friend

and Humble Servant,

William Hobby.

January 23. 1750, 1.



1913

Hydrogen mill

